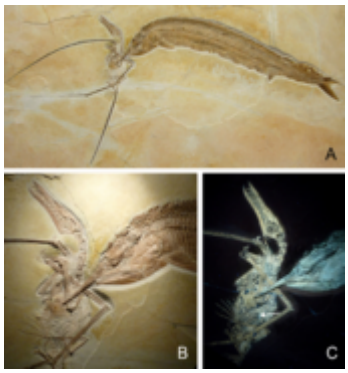
Aspidorhynchus

Aspidorhynchus (meaning "shield snout") is an extinct genus of ray-finned fish from the Jurassic and Cretaceous periods. Fossils have been found in Europe and Antarctica.

Restoration

Aspidorhynchus was a slender, fast-swimming fish, 60 centimetres (2.0 ft) long, with tooth-lined, elongated jaws. It also had heavy scales and a symmetrical tail. The upper jaw was longer than the lower jaw, ending in a toothless spike. Although it would have looked superficially similar to the present day gar, its closest living relative is actually the bowfin.[1]

Ecology



Fossil specimen WDC CSG 255, including a *Rhamphorhynchus* with a *Leptolepides* fish trapped in the pharynx and caught in the jaws of an *Aspidorhynchus*

Several limestone slabs have been discovered in which fossils of *Rhamphorhynchus* are found in close association with *Aspidorhynchus*. In one of these specimens, the jaws of an *Aspidorhynchus* pass through the wings of the *Rhamphorhynchus* specimen. The *Rhamphorhynchus* also has the remains of a small fish, possibly *Leptolepides*, in its throat. This slab, cataloged as WDC CSG 255, may represent two levels of predation; one by *Rhamphorhynchus* and one by *Aspidorhynchus*. In a 2012 description of WDC CSG 255, researchers proposed that the *Rhamphorhynchus* individual had just caught a *Leptolepides* while it was flying low over a body of water. As the *Leptolepides* was travelling down its pharynx, a large *Aspidorhynchus* would have attacked from below the water, puncturing the left wing membrane of the *Rhamphorhynchus* with its sharp rostrum. The teeth in its snout were ensnared in the fibrous tissue of the wing membrane, and as the fish thrashed to release itself the left wing of the *Rhamphorhynchus* was pulled backward into the distorted position

Aspidorhynchus

Temporal range:

Middle Jurassic–Late Cretaceous

Pre€ € O S D C P T J K PgN

Fossil

Scientific classification

Kingdom:	Animalia
Phylum:	Chordata
Class:	Actinopterygii
Order:	†Aspidorhynchiformes
Family:	†Aspidorhynchidae
Genus:	†*Aspidorhynchus* Agassiz, 1843

Species

- *A. acutirostris* Blainville, 1818
- *A. crassus* Woodward, 1890
- *A. euodus* Egerton, 1845
- *A. fisheri* Egerton, 1854

seen in the fossil. The encounter resulted in the death of both individuals, most likely because the two animals sank into an anoxic layer in the water body, depriving the fish of oxygen. The two may have been preserved together as the weight of the head of the *Aspidorhynchus* held down the much lighter body of the *Rhamphorhynchus*.[2]

- *A. sanzenbacheri*
  Brito and Ebert, 2009

Species

- *Aspidorhynchus fisheri* (Egerton 1845)[3]
- *Aspidorhynchus ornatissimus* (Agassiz 1834)[3]
- *Aspidorhynchus sanzenbacheri* (Brito and Ebert 2009)[3]

References

1. Palmer, D., ed. (1999). *The Marshall Illustrated Encyclopedia of Dinosaurs and Prehistoric Animals*. London: Marshall Editions. p. 38. ISBN 1-84028-152-9.
2. Frey, E.; and Tischlinger, H. (2012). "The Late Jurassic pterosaur *Rhamphorhynchus*, a frequent victim of the ganoid fish *Aspidorhynchus*?" (http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0031945). *PLoS ONE*. **7** (3): e31945. Bibcode:2012PLoSO...7E1945F (https://ui.adsabs.harvard.edu/abs/2012PLoSO...7E1945F). doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0031945 (https://doi.org/10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0031945). PMC 3296705 (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3296705). PMID 22412850 (https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22412850).
3. Lopez-Arbarello, Adriana; Schröder, Kerstin M (13 July 2013). "The species of Aspidorhynchus Agassiz, 1833 (Neopterygii, Aspidorhynchiformes) from the Jurassic plattenkalks of Southern Germany" (https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12542-013-0187-z). *Paläontologische Zeitschrift*. **88**: 167–185. doi:10.1007/s12542-013-0187-z (https://doi.org/10.1007%2Fs12542-013-0187-z).

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